

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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CINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANAA 1151

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CH, JO, SA, UR, US, XE, YE

SUBJECT: SENIOR YEMEN MILITARY OFFICER ON INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS

1. SUMMARY: DURING MAY 12 DINNER DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND
CHIEF OF STAFF DESCRIBED PRESENT INTERNAL POLITICAL AND
SECURITY SITUATION AS GOOD; STATED THAT ABU LUHUM CLIQUE
FINISHED; ADMITTED CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT AL-AHMAR
REMAINS SERIOUS PROBLEM BUT CAN BE HANDLED; REPORTED THAT SOVIETS
HAVE BEEN SPREADING ANTI-AMERICAN RUMORS IN SANAA; HOPED FOR
REMOVAL OF ALL SOVIET ADVISERS FROM YEMENI ARMY BUT NOTED YARG'S
INABILITY DO THIS UNTIL ALTERNATIVE SUPPLY, PREFERABLE AMERICAN
ASSURED; EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR US SUPPORT TO HAMDI
BUT ALSO HOPED FOR INCREASE IN DIRECT US ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING
TRAINING FOR YEMENI MIDDLE GRADE OFFICERS; ASKED ABOUT
DELIVERY
OF RECENTLY PURCHASED US JEEPS; WELCOMED VISIT OF COMMANDEASTFOR
REAR ADMIRAL BIGLEY; MENTIONED CHINESE AMBASSADOR'S RECENT WARNING
ABOUT SOVITE IMPERIALIST DESIGNS ON YEMEN; STATED OBVIOUSLY
SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR JORDANIAN ASSISTANCE; EMPHASIZED
NEED FOR SPEEDIER SAUDI ACTION ON MODERNIZATION OF
YEMEN AMRY AND WONDERED IF VISIT TO RIYADH BY HIGH
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RANKING YEMENI OFFICIALS MIGHT NOT BE APPROPRIATE; CITED RECENT

REFORMS IN YEMEN ARMY. GHASHMI IS AN INTELLIGENT, LOYAL SUPPORTER OF HAMDI. BOTH MEN AND THEIR MODERATE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SUPPORTERS SHOULD QUICKLY BE BOLSTERED BY US AND SAUDI ARABIA THROUGH EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILITARY MODERNIZATION PLAN AS WELL AS BY CONTINUED SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION OF SUITABLE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. PROMPT DELIVERY OF RECENTLY PURCHASED AMERICAN JEEPS WOULD GREATLY HELP IN FORMER REGARD.

2. DURING LONG QYB 12 DINNER HOSTED BY JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR AT HIS RESIDENCE DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND CHIEF OF STAFF AHMED GHASHMI (THE ONLY OTHER GUEST) COMMENTED ON A WIDE VARIETY OF SUBJECTS COVERED IN SUCCEEDING PARAGRAPHS.

3. INTERNAL SITUATION. GHASHMI DESCRIBED PRESENT INTERNAL POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION AS GOOD. SEVERAL TIMES HE ASSURED ME THAT "THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT" BECAUSE OF THE "CONFIRMED" LOYALTY OF THE ARMY AND OF THE PEOPLE TO PRESIDENT AL-HAMDI AND TO THE MODERATE POLICIES WHICH HE IS PRESENTLY PURSUING. GHASHMI CATEGORICALLY STATED THAT THE ABU LUHUM FAMILY IS FINISHED IN YEMEN AND ADDED UARCASTICALLY THAT HE HAD ADVISED THEM TO SIT BACK AND LIVE OFF THEIR ILL-GOTTEN GAINS. IN ADDITION, GHASHMI EMPHASIZED THAT MUJAHID ABU SHAWARIB IS ALSO FINISHED AND NOTED THAT WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS REMOVAL AS COMMANDER OF THE MAJD BRIGADE WAS MADE AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE BRIGADE'S SOLDIERS WELCOMED THE NEWS. GHASHMI CONTINUED THAT CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT AL-AHMAR IS "STUPID" BECAUSE HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THAT HIS FRIENDS LIKE THE ABU LUHUMS AND ABU SHAWARIB ARE HIS REAL ENEMIES AND HAD THEY BEEN ABLE TO REMOVE AL-HAMDI, AL-AHMAR WOULD HAVE BEEN NEXT IN LINE. GHASHMI SAID THAT THE PROBLEM IS AL-AHMAR DOES NOT KNOW WHAT HE WANTS BUT MANY YEMENIS ALSO BELIEVE HE IS MORE INTERESTED IN HIS OWN PERSONAL AGGRANDIZEMENT THAN HE IS IN YEMEN'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. GHASHMI SAID THAT ANYONE IN YEMEN KNOWS AL-AHMAR AS WELL AS THE ABU LUHUMS HAVE BECOME MILLIONAIRES OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE YEMEN PEOPLE. HE WENT ON THAT HAMDI AND THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT GENUINELY WISH TO COOPERATE WITH AL-AHMAR BUT

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AL-AHMAR MUST REALIZE THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY COMPROMISE SO FAR. HE CONCLUDED THAT "AL-AHMAR IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM BUT HE CAN BE HANDLED".

4. SYEMEN-SOVIET RELATIONS. GHASHMI STATED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN SPREADING RUMORS IN SANAA THAT THE AMERICANS WERE BEHIND HAMDI'S RECENT DECISIONS TO REMOVE THE ABU LUHUM CLIQUE.

IN ADDITION, THE SOVIETS ARE SAYING THAT THE SAUDIS AND THE JORDANIANS ARE ACTING AS FRONT MEN FOR THE AMERICANS. THE SOVIETS ARE ALSO WARNING THEIR YEMENI FRIENDS OF IMPERIALIST AND REACTIONARY INTERFERENCE IN YAMEN'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AS AN EFFORT TO ROUSE ANTI-WEST SENTIMENT HERE. GHASHMI DOUBTED THAT THESE HEAVY-HANDED SOVIET ATTEMPTS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN CONCINCING ANYONE. GHASHMI CONTINUED THAT IN THE MEANTIME THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN TRYING TO SEE HIM BUT GHASHMI HAS BEEN PUTTING HIM OFF BECAUSE HE UNDERSTANDS THAT AMONG OTHER THINGS THE AMBASSADOR WISHES TO INVITE GHASHMI TO THE USSR AND GHASHMI HAS NO INTENTION OF ACCEPTING THIS INVITATION. GHASHMI NOTED PARANTHETICALLY THAT THE SOVIET COMMERCIAL ATTACHE, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS A SOVIET INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, RECENTLY CAME TO SEE HIM TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE SALE OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT. DURING THE DISCUSSION, THE COMMERCIAL ATTACHE ASSERTED THAT ALL COUNTRIES WHICH ARE TRUE FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET UNION CAN ALWAYS RELY ON SOVIET SUPPORT AND CAN BE SURE OF BEING ON THE VICTORIOUS SIDE POINTING TO VIETNAM AS AN EXAMPLE. GHASHMI SAID THAT AFTER COMMERCIAL ATTACHE WAS FINISHED HE SIMPLY ASKED THE LATTER WHO REALLY WINS ON THE SOVIET SIDE. THE SOVIET BECAME VISIBLY UPSET AND TERMINATED THE CONVERSATION. GHASHMI CONTINUED THAT HIS MAJOR HOPE IS TO SEE ALL SOVIETS REMOVED FROM YEMEN PARTICULARLY THE SOVIET ADVISERS IN THE ARMY. HE NOTED THIS CANNOT OCCUR, HOWEVER, UNTIL THE YEMEN ARMY HAS AN ASSURED ALTERNATIVE SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, PREFERABLE FROM THE US.

5. YEMEN-US RELATIONS. GHASHMI EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR US SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT HAMDI AND YEMEN GOVERNMENT DURING THE LAST THREE WEEKS WHICH "WERE MOST DIFFICULT PERIOD IN YEMEN SINCE THE DAYS OF THE REVOLUTION". GHASHMI CONTINUED THAT YEMEN NOW HOPES TO SEE AN INCREASE IN DIRECT TANGIBLE

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US ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN, ALTHOUGH THE KING FULLY APPRECIATES ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES WHICH USG NOW FACES AS WELL AS PRIMARY ROLE WHICH SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD PLAY IN THIS REGARD. GHASHMI OBSERVED THAT EVEN SMALL AMOUNTS GO FAR IN A POOR COUNTRY LIKE YEMEN AND THAT THE YARG DOES NOT EXPECT MASSIVE US SUPPORT? REASONABLY IMMEDIATE IMPACT-MAKING ASSISTANCE TO THE ARMY, HOWEVER, WOULD HELP THE YARG CONVINCE THE YOUNGER OFFICERS THAT US IS INDEED STANDING BEHIND YEMEN'S PRESENT MODERATE GOVERNMENT. IN THIS REGARD GHASHMI ASKED ME AGAIN HOW LONG BEFORE THE RECENTLY PURCHASED US JEEPS WOULD BE DELIVERED. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD ASKED WASHINGTON TO CONSIDER THE MOST EXPEDITIOUS MEANS POSSIBLE BUT I WAS STILL NOT IN A POSITION TO GIVE HIM A FIRM ARRIVAL DATE. GHASHMI POINTED OUT THAT THE ARRIVAL OF THESE JEEPS WOULD DO MUCH TO

ENHANCE THE AMERICAN'S IMAGE WITHIN THE ARMY. GHASHMI CONTINUED THAT HE LOOKS FORWARD TO HIS TRIP TO THE US THIS SUMMER AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT USG WOULD MAKE AVAILABLE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF TRAINING SLOTS IN US FOR MIDDLE GRADE YEMENI OFFICERS. HE NOTED THAT WHILE MANY OF THESE OFFICERS HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO STRONG SOVIET INFLUENCE AND TRAINING, THE MAJORITY WANTS AMERICAN TRAINING BECUASE THEY REALIZE IT IS THE BEST. GHASHMI ALSO WELCOMED VISIT OF COMMANDEASTFOR REAR ADMINARL T J BIGLEY NOW SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 6-8 AND WHICH HE SAID WOULD BE OCCURING AT A VERY GOOD TIME.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5497

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANAA 1151

6. YEMEN-JORDAN RELATIONS. GHASHMI SEVERAL TIMES DURING DINNER EXPRESSED DEEP AND OBVIOUSLY SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR JORDAN'S ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN, CITING SPECIFICALLY EFFECTIVE WORK OF JORDAN'S MILITARY ADVISORS IN IMPROVING YEMEN'S ARMY AND IN NEUTRALIZING SOVIET INFLUENCE. GHASHMI ALSO WENT OUT OF WAY TO PRAISE THE JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR FOR LATTER'S PERSONAL EFFORTS TO HELP YEMEN AND IN PARTICULAR THE YEMEN ARMY NOTING JOCLARLY THAT WHEN THE JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR RETIRES HE WILL BE GIVEN PIECE OF LAND IN YEMEN SO THAT HE MAY SETTLE HERE PERMANENTLY.

7. YEMEN-CHINA RELATIONS. GHASHMI STATED THAT CHINESE AMBASSADOR HAD QUERIED HIM ABOUT YEMEN-CHINESE RELATIONS FOLLOWING THE RECENT

UNEXPECTED REMOVAL OF LTC SHAWARIB FROM HIS MILITARY
COMMAND WHILE LATTER WAS ON OFFICIAL VISIT TO COMMUNIST CHINA.
GHASHMI SAID HE ASSURED CIJNNESE AMBASSADOR THAT YEMENI-CHINESE
RELATIONS REMAIN GOOD AND THAT YEMEN WISHED TO
BE
FRIENDS WITH
EVERYBODY. CHINESE AMBASSADOR THEN WARNED GHASHMI ABOUT SOVIET
IMPERIALIST DESIGNS ON YEMEN. GHASHMI SAID THAT HE TOLD AMBASSADOR
YEMENIS UNDERSTAND THEY CANNOT TRUST SOVIETS. CHINESE AMBASSADOR
ASKED HOW YEMENIS FEEL ABOUT THE US. GHASHMI REPLIED THAT AT LEAST
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"AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS WORK IN THE OPEN, UNLIKE THE SOVIETS WHO
ARE ALWAYS CONSPIRING FROM BEHIND."

8. YEMEN-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS. GHASHMI EMPHASIZED THAT SAUDI
ARABIA'S BEST DEFENSE AGAINST LEFTIST EXTREMISM IS YEMEN'S
PRESENT MODERATE GOVERNMENT. SHOULD THIS GOVERNMENT BE
OVERTHROWN "SAUDI ARABIA WOULD NOT LAST TWO WEEKS. GHASHMI
CONTINUED THAT SAUDIS CURRENTLY APPEAR TO UNDERSTAND THIS FACT
ARE ARE NOW BEING MORE FORTHCOMING IN THEIR SUPPORT FOR HAMDI.
GHASHMI ADDED, THE YEMENIS, HOWEVER, WISH SAUDIS WOULD MOVE
FAST ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN ORDER TO MODERNIZE YEMEN'S
ARMY AND THEREBY ELIMINATE SOVIZQ INFLQSFAE IN THE COUNTRY.
GHASHMI ASKED ME IF I THOUGHT A VISIT TO RIYADH BY HIGH RANKING
YEMENI OFFICIALS INCLUDING PERHAPS EVEN PRESIDENT HAMDI AND
FONMIN ASNAG WOULD BE USEFUL. I REPLIED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE.
GHASHMI SAID HE WOULD CONVEY MY OPINION TO HAMDI.

9. REFORM OF YEMEN ARMY. GHASHMI STATED THAT THE YARG INTENDS
TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS OF YEMEN SOLDIERS THROUGH INCREASE SALARIES,
RETIREMENT PLANS AND VACATION BENEFITS. AT SOME TIME THE ARMY
WILL BE PURGED OF "UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS" WHOM GHASHMI SAID ARE
KNOWN TO ME "ONE BY ONE". GHASHMI ADDED THAT HAMDI
HAD MANE MEETINGS WITH VARIOUS UNITS DURING THE LAST SEVERAL
WEEKS AND HAS BEEN ASSURED OF THE LOYALTY AND SUPPORT OF THE
OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE OFFICERS AND THE ENLISTED MEN.

10. COMMENTS: I HAVE REPORTED GHASHMI'S COMMENTS IN SOME
DETAIL IN ORDER TO GIVE A FULL PICTURE OF HIS THINKING. AS
REPORTED BEFORE, GHASHMI APPEARS TO BE COMPLETELY LOYAL TO HAMDI
AND GENUINELY TO ADMIRE HIM AS A SOLDIER AND AS A PERSON. C
ASHMI
HIMSELF IS NOBODY'S FOOL AND WHILE HE MAY LACK CONVENTIONAL
MILITARY EXPERTISE HE KNOWS HIS OWN ARMY INSIDE-OUT. HGYAMDI HAS
DOUBTLESS BEEN RELYING ON THIS KNOWLEDGE TO ASSURE THE
LOYALTY OF THIS KEY ELEMENT. BOTH THE DEFENSE ATTACHE
AND I HAVE DEVELOPED GOOD RAPPORT WITH GHASHMI (LONG
HOURS OF DRINKING BLACK LABEL HAVE DOUBTLESSLY HELPED IN
THIS REGARD) AND WE BOTH BELIEVE THAT GHASHMI IS

GIVING US A SINCERE UNVARNISHED PICTURE OF HIS FEELINGS
AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE PRESENT IN-GROUP, WHICH IS TRYING
HARD TO ESTABLISH A MODERATE AND PROGRESSIVE POLICY FOR ITS
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IMPOVERISHED COUNTRY. I AM CONVINCED THAT THE EMERGENCY
OF HAMDI, GHASHMI AND THEIR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SUPPORTERS
REPRESENTS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR YEMEN TO GET
ON WITH THE WORK OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORMS AND EVEN
MORE IMPORTANT FOR US TO ESTABLISH A MODERATE PRO-WESTERN
GOVERNMENT IN A SENSITIVE REGION OF THE WORLD AT A TIME WHEN SUCH
GOVERNMENTS ARE ON THE DEFENSIVE IN SO MANY UNDERDEVELOPED
COUNTRIES. I AM CONVINCED, THEREFORE, THAT THE US AND
SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD NOW MOVE QUICKLY TO BOLSTER THIS GROUP AT
A CRITICAL TIME IN THE EVOLUTION OF THEIR THINKING AND
POLICY-MAKING AND STRONGLY URGE THAT INTER ALIA WE AND THE
SAUDIS FOLLOW-THROUGH PROMPTLY WITH THE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM
OF THE YEMENI ARMY. AS AN EARNEST OF OUR INTENTIONS, SPEEDY
DELIVERY OF THE 30 JEEPS WOULD BE AN EFFECTIVE OPENDR.
MEANWHILE WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION
TO PROPOSALS TO INCREASE OUR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AS SUITABLE
PROJECTS ARE IDENTIFIED.
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